



# Inside CFSA

*For Our Child-Serving Community*

May 23, 2003 – National Foster Care Month

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## Plan Approval Marks Major Step in Child Welfare Reform

On May 14, District Judge Thomas F. Hogan approved a final, long-term Implementation Plan in the *LaShawn A. v. Williams* lawsuit, which seeks to reform the District's child welfare system. It provides a blueprint for establishing a strong safety net for abused/neglected children and troubled families in the District. It also spells out what the city must do to comply with all terms and conditions of the lawsuit, providing an opportunity to end court oversight of child welfare in the District in 2007.

The final Implementation Plan, negotiated among the plaintiffs, District officials, and court-appointed monitor at the Center for the Study of Social Policy:

- Addresses **all key aspects of child welfare administration and operations**—from staffing and caseload levels to contracting and information systems.
- **Details specific outcomes and strategies** for achieving safety, permanence, and well being of children and families involved in the public child protective system.
- Establishes **progressive time frames for performance** at intervals from June 30, 2003, through Dec. 31, 2006.
- Holds **CFSA** accountable for achieving performance goals, while also containing requirements that affect **Family Court, the Corporation Counsel, other District agencies** (such as the Departments of Mental Health and Human Services), and **community providers** under contract to CFSA.
- Makes the District accountable for funding.

The court-appointed monitor at CSSP will continue to track District progress in complying with the Implementation Plan. Failure to meet interim performance targets may trigger further legal action from the plaintiffs.

### Teens Doing Fine with Exceptional Foster Dad

After meeting a troubled teen boy diagnosed with manic depression, Anthony Hall began fostering in 1998. "If you really care about me, you'll adopt me," the boy said. This challenge hit home with Hall and marked a turning point in his career-focused life. Six years later, Hall, 35, has fostered several male teens and currently has three residing with him in his District home.

Foster dads, like Hall, who can provide nurturing, structure, and a positive role model for teen males are unfortunately rare. CFSA urgently needs individuals and families interested in fostering teens. Too often, foster youth,

especially males, are in group homes because family settings are not readily available for them. How does Hall manage it? He simply says, "I don't judge them. I find out who they are. I try not to dwell on anything negative."

In fact, Hall has found an insightful approach that even birth parents of biological teens would envy. Hall's foster teens are all turning their lives around after overcoming major difficulties.

- Larry\*, 19, graduated from high school as valedictorian and is currently studying social work at the University of Maryland.
- John\*, 17, the newest member of the household, came to Hall from an Independent Living Program. Hall is researching resources and working on an educational plan for John.
- Marvin\*, 16, has improved enough to "step down" from living with a proctor (full-time, professional) foster parent to Hall's home. At a special school, Marvin is on the honor roll with a 3.7 grade point average. He hopes to attend a mainstream school in his senior year and aspires to be a pastor.

"I focus them on short-term goals. Every day is a different day," Hall said. "I get them to start treating my home as their home, furnishing them with a key, and not locking anything down. I include them in daily business—from cooking to grocery shopping, planning, and budgeting while building trust without limitations, making them feel like family. I'm active with their schooling and medical plans. I find out what they aren't comfortable with and make them comfortable so they can succeed. It's all about love." ■

*\*Names have been changed to protect confidentiality.*

In observance of National Foster Care Month, CFSA along with co-sponsors DC Lottery, Alliance of Concerned Men and Target honored local foster parents with a cruise luncheon on the Spirit of Washington on May 17. In addition, on May 31, CFSA will hold a mini conference for youth (ages 16-21), there will also be a Foster parent Gala the same evening for local parents sponsored by the Council of Government (COG). A special thanks, to all of our foster parents for your continued support.

For information on becoming a foster or adoptive parent in the District, call (202) 671-LOVE. ■

*CFSA Public Information faxes this newsletter monthly to providers and other partners. To provide comments or to update your fax number, call (202) 442-6015. Editor: Derek Stewart ■*